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ABSTRACT

NONNATIVES' PERCEPTIONS OF GROUP WORK: A STUDY
OF THEIR ATTITUDES AND EXPERIENCES
IN THE GROUP WORK SETTING

by

Ellen Nogueira Rodrigues

Chair: Julia Kim

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Thesis

Andrews University

College of Arts and Sciences

Title: NONNATIVES' PERCEPTIONS OF GROUP WORK: A STUDY OF THEIR
ATTITUDES AND EXPERIENCES IN THE GROUP WORK SETTING

Name of researcher: Ellen Nogueira Rodrigues

Name and degree of faculty chair: Julia Kim, Ph.D.

Date completed: April 2012

Problem

Studies on group work in the field of second language learning have pointed out positive outcomes of this classroom instruction for providing output and input opportunities for language production, for negotiations of meaning, and for academic language. Furthermore, social-psychological factors that hinder language development are asserted to be prevented by the use of group work. Even though group work may create an excellent environment for second language acquisition, research has indicated that few opportunities seem to be conceded for second language speakers to take active participation in discussions. In short, it seems that nonnatives' interactions are hindered due to distinct cultural values, perceptions, interactional style, and the lack of language proficiency to discuss vigorously. Natives also might not assist and interact with

nonnatives. Thus, the present study attempts to elucidate the social dynamic of nonnative students' attitudes and experiences in group work.

Method

This study gathered a sample of 100 participants to explore nonnative students' attitudes and experiences. A closed-ended questionnaire with 39 questions was applied, and a Likert scale was used to measure participants' statements. Using SPSS 19, responses were entered into a spreadsheet. All positively worded items were reverse-scored to be consistent with all negatively worded statements. To answer research question 1 (What is the attitude toward and experience in group work of international students at Andrews University?), descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, percentages) were used. For research question 2 (Are attitude and experience related to gender, age, year of study, years of studying English, and scores on English Proficiency test?), *t*-tests, analysis of variance, and Spearman rho correlation were used. Statistical significance was tested at the 0.05 level.

Results

Findings indicate that L2 speakers do not perceive themselves as receiving a peripheral role in the group, in terms of passive participation and opportunities to interact. Nonnative speakers do not go through a process of apprenticeship of social practices with the assistance of native speakers. Rather, they manage interactions and participation satisfactorily. Results suggest that their perceptions of group work participation are mainly attached to difficulties related to language barriers, less so in acquiring the ability on the social practices of the group or psychological factors. Although nonnatives believe native speakers incorporate their ideas, they feel

undermined as considerably less attention is conferred on what they actually propose.

Therefore, nonnatives' group work perception has a twofold aspect: While they can participate and interact peacefully with the members of the group, they still feel devalued in their contributions, tending to like to work in groups but preferring working individually.

Conclusions

According to nonnative students, the dynamic of interactions in group work tends to be more positive than negative, which means that though nonnatives feel undermined by native speakers, thus preferring to work individually rather than in groups, their social exchange among peers can function productively.

Andrews University
College of Arts and Sciences

NONNATIVES' PERCEPTIONS OF GROUP WORK: A STUDY
OF THEIR ATTITUDES AND EXPERIENCES
IN THE GROUP WORK SETTING

A Thesis
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
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April 2012

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APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:

Julia Kim, Ph.D., Chair

Dianne Staples, M.A.

Faith-Ann McGarrell, Ph.D.

Date approved

DEDICATION

To my spouse Adriani Rodrigues who has played an important role in my life.

To Dr. Julia Kim who has inspired and assisted me in my academic journey.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	vi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	vii
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Background of the Problem	1
Statement of the Problem	2
Purpose	2
Justification for Research	3
Methodology	4
Outline of Study	5
Definition of Terms.....	6
Group Work	6
Collaborative Learning	6
Cooperative Learning.....	6
Old-Time Comers	7
Newcomers	7
2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND.....	8
Introduction	8
Group Work in Mainstream Education	8
Benefits of Group Work in L2 Learning.....	14
Benefits on Production and Input	17
Benefits on Proficiency and Academic Language	18
Benefits for Negotiations of Meaning and Interaction	19
Psychological Benefits.....	22
Learners' Opinions on Group Work Instruction	23
Problematic Aspects of the Use of Group Work.....	25
Teacher Versus Peer Work Feedback and Instruction	26
Cultural Differences.....	26
Social Factors.....	28
Discourse, Language Proficiency, and Negotiations of Meaning.....	32
Theoretical Notions Related to Participation in Group Work.....	34
Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory	34
Legitimate Peripheral Participation	36
Summary and Findings	38

3. METHODOLOGY	41
Introduction	41
Research Design	41
Population and Sample	42
Instrumentation	42
Procedure	46
Data Analysis	43
Summary	45
4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA	46
Introduction	41
Sample Characteristics	46
Validity and Reliability of the Instrument	48
Data Analysis	50
Research Question 1	52
Attitude Toward Group Work	52
Experience in Group Work	54
Research Question 2	57
Gender	57
Level of Education	58
Other Variables	59
Summary and Findings	60
5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	63
APPENDIX: SMALL GROUP WORK QUESTIONNAIRE	68
REFERENCE LIST	72

LIST OF TABLES

1.	Variables, Definitions, and References.....	44
2.	Sample Characteristics.....	49
3.	Items and Components.....	51
4.	Descriptive Statistics: Attitude	53
5.	Descriptive Statistics: Experience.....	55
6.	Variables: Gender	57
7.	Variables: Level of Education	58
8.	Other Variables	59

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EFL	English as a Foreign Language
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
Ns	Native Speakers
NNs	Nonnative Speakers

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

Group work as a learning strategy has a long history, and a considerable amount of research is available, especially with regard to cooperative and collaborative instruction. Similar to mainstream education, in the field of second language learning, group work has been found to increase social, psychological, and cognitive skills. Students are provided with more opportunities for production and input (Fathman & Kessler, 1993; Holt, Chips, & Wallace, 1992; Long & Porter, 1985; McGroarty, 1993), for negotiations of meaning (Long, Adams, McLean, & Castaños, 1976; Pica & Doughty, 1985b), and for gains on reading, listening proficiency, and academic language (Bejarano, 1987; Sharan, Bejarano, Krussel, & Peleg, 1984). Furthermore, group work aids students' negative psychological factors related to depression, increasing their self-esteem and motivation to learn a second language (Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1994; Dörnyei, 1997; Gregerson, 1999). Therefore, studies greatly support the use of group work for second language teaching classrooms.

More precisely, studies dealing with the social dimensions of group work reveal the apparent effectiveness of native and nonnative speakers' actual interaction in group work, and nonnatives' perception and participation. Overall, these studies have shown that nonnatives (NNs) have less vigorous participation due to their different interactional

styles (Carson & Nelson, 1996, 1998), cultural differences (Carson & Nelson, 1996, 1998), and inferior status in the group (Leki, 2001). Results indicate that nonnative speakers have to travel a long path to overcome cultural and social differences to obtain full participation in group work. In this process, learners are neglected and given low status participation, which hinders nonnative students' interaction with native speakers. Hence, investigations in second language learning have pointed out that group work instruction may conceal second language learners' particular burden in interaction with native speakers in a group work setting.

Statement of the Problem

According to the studies above, a tension appears to exist between the effectiveness of group work for nonnative speakers' participation and English proficiency improvement, and the real social dynamic and interactions of native and nonnative speakers. Although group work may create an excellent environment for second language acquisition, few opportunities seem to be conceded for second language speakers to participate in discussions. This problematic scenario brings forth some questions concerning nonnative speakers' interactions in group work. What happens when nonnative speakers participate with native peers? What are nonnative speakers' perceptions of group work? Is this learning technique effective for nonnative learners?

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate the attitudes toward and experiences in group work of international students (nonnative English speakers) at Andrews University. Specifically,

1. What is the attitude toward and experience in group work of international students at Andrews University?
2. Are attitudes and experiences related to gender, age, level of education, time living in the United States, years of English study in their home country and in the United States?

Justification for Research

Studies show that nonnative speakers usually do not have a satisfying experience in their interaction with native speakers' peers in group instruction (Jacob, Rottenberg, Patrick, & Wheeler, 1996; Leki, 2001; Nelson & Carson, 1998; Nelson & Murphy, 1992; Nyikos & Hashimoto, 1997). Even so, few studies unveil nonnative speakers' perceptions and actual participation in interactions with native speakers. As Leki (2001) points out, "L2 teachers and researchers have tended to neglect English learners' relationships with their peers and the impact that these relationships have on English learners' ability to take full advantage of their educational experiences" (p. 62). In this sense, the present study endeavors to understand students' experiences and attitudes and their relation to gender, age, level of education, time living in the United States, years of English study in their home country and in the United States together with nonnative social involvement, and natives' support in the group.

Consequently, this study may help language teachers acknowledge the social dimension of group work when nonnatives interact with native speakers. Overall, the literature provides studies on the topic, following a typical case study design, which presents less generalizability. For this reason, I attempt to grasp nonnatives' participation

using statistical procedures to be able to better comprehend and generalize findings related to this pedagogical technique.

Methodology

The present study uses a quantitative methodology to explore nonnative students' attitudes and participation in group work. In regard to the quantitative data, a 'closed-ended' questionnaire (see Appendix A, the number of the question is in brackets) with 39 questions was applied. From the 39 items, 12 (8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 23, 28, 29, 30, 34, 35) were designed to measure students' attitudes toward group work. Nineteen items (12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27, 31, 32, 33, 36, 37, 38) measured their experience. The remaining eight items measured demographic characteristics such as age (1), gender (2), level of education (3), time living in the United States (4), region (5), time spent studying English in the home country (6), and time studying English in the United States (7), and TOEFL score (8). Items measuring attitudes and experiences were scaled along a 5-point Likert Scale from 1 = Strongly Agree to 5 = Strongly Disagree.

The data were gathered during the months of May through June of 2011, when questionnaires were distributed in University dormitories, students' apartments, and around the campus of Andrews University (Berrien Springs, MI). An explanation of the study was provided for each participant in order to confirm whether they considered themselves nonnative speakers and understood what I meant by group work. In the first lines of the questionnaire, I also notified respondents that all the questions involving nonnative and native interactions in the group should be from their first year as a nonnative learner, in order to increase research reliability.

A sample of 100 questionnaires was collected, forming a population of 12.5% from North and Central America (Mexico, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Martinique, and Guatemala); 19.8% of South America students (Peru, Colombia, Ecuador, and Brazil); 6.3% from Europe (Spain, Norway, Romania, Serbia, Iceland, and Russia); 9.4% from Africa (Zambia, Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon, and Madagascar); and 52.1% from Asia (Malaysia, Taiwan, Korea, China, Indonesia, Myanmar, India, and Kuwait).

Using SPSS 19, responses were entered into a spreadsheet. All positively worded items were reverse-scored to be consistent with all negatively worded statements. To answer research question 1 (What is the attitude toward and experience in group work of international students at Andrews University?), descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, percentages) were used. For research question 2 (Are attitude and experience related to gender, age, level of education, years of studying English, and scores on English Proficiency test?), *t*-tests, analysis of variance, and Spearman rho correlation were used. Statistical significance was tested at the 0.05 level.

Outline of Study

In order to better understand the effectiveness of group instruction involving L2 speakers, particularly through the investigation of nonnative English speakers' attitudes and experiences in group work, this study is organized in four main parts. The second chapter provides a theoretical background of the literature on group work in the field of second language learning. The third chapter presents the methodology used in attaining nonnatives' experiences and attitudes in group work, covering research design, instrumentation, population and sample, procedure and data analysis. Then, the fourth chapter examines the attitude toward and experience of selected L2 speakers in group

work. Finally, the fifth chapter summarizes the main points of this study, delineates its conclusion, and indicates recommendations for future studies.

Definition of Terms

This section presents a definition of the technical terms used in the next chapters.

Group Work

Even though I am aware that group work in education is something separate from cooperative and collaborative and that group work means a non-structured design to group work, in this investigation, group work comprises cooperative and collaborative work. The reason for this is that few investigations are conducted on group work as a loose instruction in second language learning, and group work practices in L2 classrooms presently use either collaborative or cooperative procedures and designs.

Collaborative Learning

Collaborative learning is a general instructional paradigm that covers a variety of approaches related to group instruction. Its principles and directions provide philosophical orientations about the learning process, which is grounded on social constructivism. It encourages individuals' own initiative and develops students' higher order reasoning, problem-solving skills, and co-construction of knowledge.

Cooperative Learning

This classroom instruction is usually used in a K-12 setting and its proposition goes beyond mere group discussions, assigning specific systematic activities for the function of the group. It provides carefully designed structures about the task, the roles,

rewards, and goals, in order to create an interactive setting where cooperation is pursued at all costs.

Old-Time Comers

For the legitimate peripheral approach developed by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991), old-time comers are the native speakers of the group who have legitimate participation. That is, they exercise full participation in group work.

Newcomers

In the legitimate peripheral approach the newcomers have a peripheral participation in the group. They have a passive participation and have to engage with the old-time comers to acquire the social practices and ability to gradually exercise full participation in the community of the group.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Introduction

This chapter first presents a brief overview of group work findings in mainstream education, especially in connection with cooperative and collaborative learning. Then, a description is given of the advantages and disadvantages of group work for second language speakers. This is followed by a presentation of theoretical notions that serve as guidelines for the analysis of nonnative speakers' involvement in groups.

Group Work in Mainstream Education

Group work as a learning technique has long been investigated in several different disciplines, especially in social psychology and education studies. Convergent elements foment group development in the United States, where most studies on group work were primarily developed as an identified field of study in the 1930s. Mostly, as Cartwright and Zander (1968) highlight, the interest in group dynamics was due to America's exponentially economic, technological, and social science investigation growth, which brought professions of sociology, administration, education, and social psychology to become aware of group work as a potential element to improve social practice.

As a subdiscipline of social psychology, group dynamics has played a major role in the field since its beginnings. At that time, pioneering contributions were made by John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, and Jacob Moreno, who laid the ground of group dynamics

research. Based on Dewey's democratic philosophy, Lewin and Moreno developed the study of group process as a viable domain, studying more thoroughly "the functions, operations and processes of small face-to-face groups" (Schmuck & Schmuck, 1988, p. 3). In the 1960s, with the increase of federal funding for school amelioration, a substantial body of research investigated the application of group work technique in the educational setting (e.g., Backman & Secord, 1968; Bany & Johnson, 1975; Johnson, 1970), which made it possible in the 1970s for the adoption of group work instruction in the school system.

With the increasing number of immigrants and racial segregation in the school setting, educators substituted traditional forms of learning for group technique, primarily as a way to equalize educational opportunities in order for students to develop cognitive and social abilities. Indeed, the culturally and linguistically diverse classroom strove to "include strategies that link the students in mutually supportive ways, strategies that provide the students with multiple, varied, and equal opportunities to acquire content and language" (Holt et al., 1992, p. 2). Although group work methodology has long been used in the classroom, it was not until the 70s and 80s that a specific set of principles promoted learning outcomes (Fathman & Kessler, 1993).

Group work-specific design is known as collaborative and cooperative learning. Even though both terms are used interchangeably due to tantamount goals, elements such as the structure of the tasks, participants, methods, and the degree of authority are strikingly distinctive (Oxford, 1997). Collaborative learning is a general instructional paradigm that covers a variety of approaches related to group instruction. Its principles and directions provide philosophical orientations about the learning process, which is

grounded on social constructivism. In fact, collaborative learning encourages individuals' own initiative and develops students' higher order reasoning, problem-solving skills, and co-construction of knowledge, where by working together students reacclurate in the community of knowledge (Bruffee, 1999). Widely adopted in colleges and universities, collaborative learning instruction covers a broad variety of forms, proposing a less prescriptive technique model to control groups. Students are not assigned a specific social role, and the teachers are facilitators who rarely exert authority to intervene in heated discussions. Thus, in order to build on students' critical thinking skills, participants have to resolve conflicts themselves.

Cooperative learning instruction provides a set of principles for an effective application of group work. Indeed, the cooperative learning approach provides beneficial instructional resources for the "use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning" (Johnson & Johnson, 1999, p. 5). For this purpose a wide range of cooperative learning methods has been provided, which go beyond mere group discussions, assigning specific systematic activities for the function of the group. Some of the most widely used and investigated methods include the following: Students Team Learning (Slavin, 1983), Jigsaw (Aaronson, 1978), Learning Together (Johnson & Johnson, 1987), the Group Investigation Method (Sharan & Sharan, 1976), and the Structural Approach (Kagan, 1993). These methods provide carefully designed structures about the task, the roles, rewards, and goals, in order to create an interactive setting where cooperation is pursued at all costs. In the classroom, the teacher has the authority to discourage any type of dissension, maximizing an agreeable environment where students share their ideas, co-construct knowledge.

To work effectively, cooperative learning groups and tasks must be adequately formed. Learners need social skills to participate actively, and to enhance positive interdependence among members and accountability for developing tasks successfully (Olsen & Kagan, 1992). Although cooperative learning methods have different forms of implementation, they share similar principles concerning the adequate operation of group work. Students must develop positive interdependence, that is, members feel linked to the group to the point of contributing to the benefit of the whole group. Other characteristics include individual accountability, where students are given unique responsibility and equal opportunities for the accomplishment of group goals (Sharan, 1990; Slavin, 1995). Cooperative learning has become a prominent element of classroom organization, as it provides elaborated principles for enhancing cognitive, social, and psychological skills. As Oxford (1997) synthesizes, “cooperative learning has taken on the connotation of a set of highly structured, psychologically and sociologically based techniques that helps students work together to reach learning goals” (p. 444).

With the current enthusiasm about collaborative and cooperative learning, a remarkable upsurge of research has emphasized the benefits of group work to a point that these innovative instructional designs have become the most extensively investigated approach in every conceivable domain (Slavin, 1995). A significant influence to its exponential growth is related to the pedagogical shift to a student-centered approach, in which the teacher is no longer the transmitter of knowledge, but a facilitator assisting students to engage in their own learning. As Felder and Brent (1996) claim, student-centered instruction “holds students responsible for assigning open-ended problems and problems requiring critical or creative thinking that cannot be solved by following text

examples, . . . assigning a variety of unconventional writing exercises, and using self-paced and/or cooperative (team-based) learning” (p. 43). Therefore, the majority of studies on group work have centered on these particular group work designs (cooperative and collaborative), promoting its effective outcome when utilized as an essential element in classroom organization.

Major successful advantages of employing group techniques are factors such as positive interdependence and individual accountability among group members (Johnson & Johnson, 1987). In this sense, students have equal responsibility in tasks, and they are no longer competing or working alone to accomplish goals, since everyone works interconnected to enhance each other’s learning. According to Slavin’s (1991) synthesis on cooperative learning research, “when group goals and individual accountability are used, achievement effects of cooperative learning are constantly positive; 37 of 44 experimental/control comparisons . . . have found significantly positive effects, and none have favored traditional methods” (p. 61).

Cooperative and collaborative learning have been found to make significant gains in intergroup relations (Sharan & Shachar, 1988), self-esteem, and social behavior (Madden & Slavin, 1983; Slavin, 1995). As studies indicate, learners feel important to the group’s success, thus, they express less anxiety and greater self-esteem, which activates their ability to relate to teammates and to negotiate information. As Solomon, Watson, Schaps, Battistich, and Solomon’s (1990) research shows, when elementary school students are taught by cooperative learning methods, they develop pro-social behavior, where they are better able to provide assistance to peers and resolve conflicts. Face-to-face interactions promote students’ ability to formulate thought into words and allow

students to construct and expand their knowledge, building on peers' ideas (Eggen & Kauchak, 2006). This, in turn, induces the subject-matter to become more challenging, developing a disposition to increase their knowledge and manage information (McCaslin & Good, 1996).

Yet, cooperative and collaborative learning appreciation comes not only from their benefits for psychological and social behavior conditions, but also for their potential in improving learning, language ability, and academic achievements. Slavin (1991) indicates that up to that time, 67 studies dealt with the effects of cooperative learning on academic achievements, where "41 (61 percent) found significantly greater achievement in cooperative than in the control classes" (p. 76). Kagan (1993) also proposes that the inclusion of cooperative learning structure approaches in everyday classes would dramatically improve academic achievements.

Language production is another important element in cooperative learning, which, according to Kagan (1986), increases the benefits of group work, because students have more opportunities to speak and make the meaning without the teacher's assistance. Therefore, incorporating group work into the classroom can enable certain goals, such as meaningful learning of subjects, motivation to learn, appropriate psychological conditions for learning, higher academic achievements, and prosocial behavior.

Although researchers have consistently demonstrated the effectiveness of the group work approach, other studies have questioned it by indicating potential pitfalls (see Allen, 1991; Robinson, 1990; Slavin, 1991). In these studies, not all students flourish in the group setting because learners' different ability levels result in different gains (Leechor, 1988; Mulryan, 1993; Webb, 1992). Following this perspective, low-achieving

students are passive when interacting with peers, while high-achieving students who are actively engaged benefit more from cooperative learning (Mulryan, 1993). According to King (1993), “high-achieving students assumed dominant roles, the undertaking of group tasks, in group decision making, and in the frequency and quality of contributions to group efforts” (p. 399), whereas low-achieving students are passive in group work instruction. Indeed, participation in group work requires social intelligence and involvement in negotiations to attain positive results. For this reason, not all students consistently gain the same benefits, since some of them may not possess the skills of high achievers.

Slavin (1988) also points out that cooperative learning must be properly constructed to fulfill two essential conditions—group goal and individual accountability—in order to achieve instructionally profitable results. Furthermore, group work must be strictly organized to avoid the free-ride effect and the “diffusion of responsibility” (Slavin, 1983, 1995), where students ignore less skillful members, leaving little room for contribution or time for assisting their needs.

Benefits of Group Work in L2 Learning

The use of group work in the second language classroom has relied on sound theoretical and pedagogical arguments, which indicate maximum learning and language acquisition. Multiple sources influenced the emergence of group work in the L2 classrooms, such as sociocultural theory, collaborative and cooperative learning group methods, writing as a process, communicative competence, communicative language teaching, and the psycholinguistic rationale for group work. Nevertheless, these various influences were occasioned by the educational shift to a learner-centered classroom,

which was crucial for transforming the teacher as a facilitator of the learning process, and the group work as a central learning instructional unit.

Group work has long been part of second language learning methodology, yet only in the last decades it has received “systematic and practical cooperative learning methods intended for use as the main element of classroom organization” (Slavin, 1995, p. 4). Even though the topic has accumulated a solid and growing body of research, further studies are needed to provide a more precise understanding of the effects of cooperative and collaborative learning on second language acquisition, and of the nature of interactions in group instruction.

In the field of second language learning, much of the literature that promotes group work has been conducted on cooperative learning formats, and few studies have been done on collaborative learning. Studies on cooperative learning have explored second language acquisition in a wide variety of cooperative methods, which has provided more opportunities for production and input (Fathman & Kessler, 1993; Holt et al., 1992; Long & Porter, 1985; McGroarty, 1993), for negotiations of meaning (Long et al., 1976; Pica & Doughty, 1985b), and gains on proficiency and academic language (Bejarano, 1987; Sharan et al., 1984). Furthermore, group work aids students’ psychological barriers, such as depression and feelings of inadequacy, by creating a positive setting where members form a cohesive group. In this context, their self-esteem and motivation become higher, giving more confidence for students to express and develop their ideas (Clément et al., 1994; Dörnyei, 1997; Gregerson, 1999).

On the other hand, studies carried by the collaborative strand have used sociocultural theory framework, based on Lev Vygotsky, to study L2 students’ assistance

and interactions more thoroughly (DiCammilla & Anton, 1997; Donato, 1994, 2000). Additionally, collaborative instruction has investigated peer groups and their effects on the writing process (Liang, 2010; Lockhart & Ng, 1995; Villamil & deGuerrero, 1996).

Favorable reports have shown that when learners work in groups they can exercise their own initiative to speak, they are more exposed to input and output, and they can develop more testing and confirmation hypotheses, which is essential for second language acquisition. Students are also able to enhance communicative competence, as they use language in real communication interactions, being actively involved in the co-construction of dialogue. Almost, all the studies that advocate group work benefits have been drawn from comparisons between the teacher-fronted situation and the group work setting, which reveals that students who learn from the teacher alone are exposed to restricted discourse and controlled instructions. In the teacher-fronted situation, learners use accurate language forms termed by Barnes (1992) as *final draft*. That is, the language that learners use to communicate with the teacher is more standard, sophisticated, and less spontaneous due to the audience effect. The fact that students are speaking publicly in front of a large group of students tends to inhibit them to create language forms, and pressure them to speak correct standard.

In contrast, the “small-group setting apparently permit[s] pupils to think aloud and, by necessity, to talk in less polished language. There was far less inhibition and tension under these circumstances because discourse served communicative needs rather than the demands of public recitation” (Bejarano, 1987, p. 495). Thus, in group dynamics language is acquired informally in a spontaneous sphere, where students speak freely

without the preoccupation of using highly accurate forms and are more able to develop social communication skills.

The following sections deal more thoroughly with specific benefits of this group work instruction, particularly in terms of production and input, proficiency and academic language, negotiations of meaning and interactions, psychological factors and learners' opinions about groups.

Benefits on Production and Input

One of the early studies on cooperative learning and language learning was conducted by Long et al. (1976). They compared intermediate students' verbal interaction and language production in the group and in the teacher-discussion situation. Findings reveal that students had greater opportunity to communicate in the group. Actually, they produced a wider variety of language forms and functions (e.g., rhetorical, pedagogical, and social) than the teacher-led discussions, which indicates that group work can be an efficient instrument for teaching students in their specific needs even in larger classrooms.

Interested in the effects of available input and language production, Pica and Doughty (1985b) compared small-group discussion, pair work, and teacher-fronted discussions. The inquiry concluded that students in the group and pair work have more opportunities to practice the target language form and engage in direct interaction with language production than in the teacher-fronted discussion. Results display the fact that in the teacher-fronted discussion only the teacher and a few dominant students interact, providing less chances for all students to participate. The statistics of this study indicate

that significantly more negotiation occurred in the group (66%) and in pair work (68%) than the teacher-fronted discussion (45%).

In another study, Gregerson (1999) examined communication anxiety, particularly comparing the amount of participation and oral proficiency of Hispanic speakers of English in groups and in the teacher-fronted environment. The study suggests that group work reduces the levels of anxiety and augments opportunities for turn-taking and production of the target language form, increasing the frequency of classroom participation. However, for oral proficiency levels, the settings of instruction, whether groups or teacher-centered, receive similar results.

Benefits on Proficiency and Academic Language

Studies have compared particular forms of group work versus the whole-class instruction and its effect on proficiency. In this vein, Sharan et al. (1984) conducted an extensive examination of two cooperative types of group work, namely, the G-I (Group Investigation) that derives from Johnson, Sharan, and Lazarowitz's expansion of Dewey's work, and the STAD (Slavin's Student Teams and Academic Divisions), in comparison with the whole-class instruction. The statistical analysis of pre- and post-achievement tests shows that G-I and STAD did not differ on their degree of improvement in English. Nevertheless, both group-method instructions were more effective than the whole-class instruction on listening and reading improvement.

Known for adapting the DG (Discussion Group) technique for EFL learners, Bejarano (1987) has also compared STAD and DG in relation to the traditional classroom. Similar to the other study, results show that the two small-group dynamics improved listening comprehension to a greater degree than the traditional setting;

nevertheless, divergent results appear for reading comprehension, which did not differ from the whole-class instruction. According to Bejarano the improvement on listening comprehension is “due to the fact that the learning tasks (especially in the DG classes) require verbal communication which involve speaking and listening intermittently rather than reciting as called upon by the teacher in the traditional classroom seems to be” (p. 496).

Few studies have explored L2 acquisition of academic language in the group setting (Jacob & Mattson, 1987; Jacob et al., 1996). Jacob and Mattson (1987) show that group work is advantageous for enhancing academic language and English language skills in the heterogeneous classroom, while Jacob et al. (1996) indicate a more complex picture, where a wide range of opportunities from input to output was provided for acquiring academic language. Yet, many opportunities were restricted to simple aspects of academic language.

Benefits for Negotiations of Meaning and Interaction

The effects of interaction and negotiation of meaning on second language acquisition have received a great deal of attention nowadays, focusing especially on the mechanisms that mediate the interaction (Gass & Selinker, 2008). Most of the studies have been conducted based on Long’s Interaction Hypothesis (Storch, 2002). Long (1996) was the first to indicate the existence of interactional modifications. Specifically, he argues that the existence of interactional modifications is crucial for second language acquisition. For him, interactions provide opportunity to modify output based on corrections necessary for language learning, as in the case of negative feedback (e.g., explicit correction or implicit correction such as clarification requests, recasts, etc.).

In order to understand the amount of modified interaction on teacher-fronted, group work, and pair work interactional patterns, Doughty and Pica (1986) examined low-intermediate ESL students in two tasks. Results indicate that the group and the student's dyad use a greater quantity of confirmation, comprehension checks, and clarification requests than the teacher-fronted instruction. However, the study points out that not only group work, but the nature of the task is also important for modified interaction. Thus, "task with a requirement for information exchange is crucial to the generation of conversation modification of classroom interaction" (p. 305).

Furthermore, Pica, Young, and Doughty (1994) compared two situations. In the first one, the input provided to the NNs was a priori modified and no opportunities were allowed for interactions, and in the second situation the input was not premodified linguistically, but the NNs were allowed opportunities to interact. Findings support the conclusion that overall comprehension was significantly improved with input that was modified by interaction, which shows that manipulation of language in interactions is more important than input that has easy structures.

Moreover, comparison between the group work and teacher-fronted situation was carried out by Rulon and McCreary (1986) on the length of students' utterances and syntactic complexity of speech. Results show no differences between syntactic complexity and the length of utterances. Nonetheless, the authors found that the group performed more negotiations, with greater use of modifications such as confirmation checks and content clarification.

Attempting to explore to what extent learners were involved with negative feedback such as recasts, clarification checks, and modified output, McDonough (2004)

improved the target language forms during pair and small group activities and analyzed students' conversations and interactional features. His conclusion reveals that learners who were more involved with negative feedback and modified output in pairs and group activities demonstrated improved production of the target form, even if their perceptions of activities were not as favorable for learning the target language.

In the tradition of sociocultural theory, Donato (1994) studied the interaction and the nature of negotiations of meaning in collaborative groups, which range from collective to loosely knit groups. The author found that collective groups actively assist and scaffold each other, encouraging a pooling of knowledge about language, a process termed by Donato (1994) as collective-scaffolding. The loosely knit groups seldom provide valuable assistance and resolutions to language-related issues. Moreover, Donato reports that 75% of the assistance on language-related issues in group interaction appears on subsequent performance, and more importantly, the nature of interactions in the group results in different language outcomes.

Not only collective knit groups are important for language learning, but also the familiarity of participants in the group. Poteau's (2011) investigation of students' attitudes in a second language foreign classroom shows that students who worked in groups with familiar peers had more positive attitudes and vocabulary retention. Hence, learners' environments appear to have a significant effect on second language acquisition.

Psychological Benefits

Research points out the advantages of group work for developing students' self-esteem and motivation (Clement et al., 1994; Dörnyei, 1997; Gregerson, 1999). As reported by Gregerson (1999), group work provided less communicative anxiety,

enhancing students' self-esteem. Indeed, students' participation in cooperative groups creates a collaborative, not a competitive sphere, where every member of the groups must encourage each other towards their goal. This brings a sense of cohesiveness and mutual help, creating conditions to increase motivation and self-esteem. According to Dörnyei (1997), important motivational components are necessary in group dynamics for developing L2's motivation, which includes "classroom goals structure, group cohesion, goal-orientedness, and the norm and reward system" (p. 487).

In another study, Clément et al. (1994) indicate that, in contrast to individual work, when students work in cooperative groups motivation to learn a second language and self-esteem increase. Additionally, the study confirms that group cohesiveness is crucial for motivation in the L2 learning context. As Barnes (1972) claims, "an intimate group allows us to be relatively inexplicit and incoherent, to change direction in the middle of a sentence, to be uncertain and self-contradictory. What we say may not amount to much, but our confidence in our friends allows us to take the first groping steps towards sorting our thoughts and feelings by putting them into words" (cited in Long, 1977, p. 218). As learners participate in groups they create a comforting atmosphere, where they are motivated to a common goal and feel willing to participate.

Gunderson and Johnson's (1980) study on students' perceptions of an introductory French course shows that group interaction inherent in cooperative learning encourages positive attitudes towards the target language, since 83% indicated that they learn more in group work, while only 14% believed that they would have better grades if they had not been part of a group. The research also lends support to the conclusion that

students obtain greater motivation working in groups as they assist and are assisted by peers.

Long and Porter's (1985) article "Group Work, Interlanguage Talk and Second Language Acquisition" indicates reasonable pedagogical arguments for group work instruction in second language learning. The arguments mainly rely on its advantages for opportunities to practice the target language for improving the quality of conversation, for individualized instruction, and for creating motivation and a positive climate effect. According to the studies mentioned previously, research has supported Long and Porter's overview of findings on group work and proposed a spectrum of positive results for second language acquisition, as it increases self-esteem, motivation, reduction of anxiety, improvement of proficiency on listening and reading skills, the quality and quantity of input, and opportunities for negotiations of meaning.

Learners' Opinions on Group Work Instruction

Studies of learners' perception on group work instruction have pointed out that learners may prefer to rely upon group work activities for learning a second language (Garrett & Shortall, 2002; McDonough, 2004; Mishra & Oliver, 1998). McDonough (2004) examined instructors' as well as learners' perceptions of pair and group activities in a Thai English-as-foreign-language context. The study suggests that instructors were not convinced that pair and group work activities enhance learning for course examinations because, for them, there is a hiatus on the objectives set for the activities and the actual implementation of those activities. On the other hand, learners responded that pair and group work were important for learning speaking and listening.

A similar study carried out by Mishra and Oliver (1998) with ESL learners in Australia reports that 70% of the students preferred pair and group work to working individually. Nevertheless, few students, especially from South East Asia, agree that working in pair and groups is better for grammar tasks. Another study on learners' perception was conducted by Garrett and Shortall (2002) with 103 Brazilian EFL students. These students had to evaluate three learning activities: teacher-fronted grammar (TFG), student-centered grammar (SCG), teacher-fronted fluency (TFF), and student-centered fluency (SCF). Results show that beginner-level students believe TFG is more effective for learning a second language than SCG, whereas elementary students present TFF as better for learning than SCF. Intermediate-level students differ from other levels, as they consider TFG and TFF as less fun and relaxing, though they did not perceive any difference in language learning outcomes.

This study proposes a progression on the levels towards a more communicative and independent classroom style. The progress of beginner levels seems to rely on the presence of the teacher in formal focused activities; they also perceive the need of a teacher in order to see the importance of drill, repetition, and error correction for learning. The elementary level moves toward a more teacher-fronted fluency, and more focus on spontaneous manipulation of language, which is a preparatory stage for less reliance on the teacher. In the intermediate level students are ready to practice their language abilities in socially interactive contexts and they need less input and assistance from the teacher, hence favoring SCF learning.

The inquiry Polley (2007) developed of ESL perceptions in small group work and pair work shows that learners have positive perceptions of the usefulness of group

instruction and feel motivated to participate in interactions. Additionally, ESL students feel the members of the group work harmoniously and the environment is favorable for learning the different language skills necessary for second language acquisition.

Problematic Aspects of the Use of Group Work

In spite of the benefits of group work in terms of opportunities for acquisition and negotiation of the target language, recent studies have suggested that group work may not be as effective when nonnative and native English speakers work together. Most of the studies that caution the use of group work and present less successful results have been conducted on the field of second language writing and peer response. In the 70s, peer response research became highly valued as a component of the process approach and other theoretical frameworks such as collaborative learning theory and Vygotsky's zone of proximal development. Studies on peer response have pointed out groups' advantages for providing feedback, enhancing writing, the exchange of ideas, socialization, and language development (DeGuerrero & Villamil, 2000; Hansen & Liu, 2005). However, studies on peer response also point out the apparent effectiveness of group work outcomes between English nonnative and native speakers, since group work may not reach its full potential on social, cultural, and cognitive variables. It means that group instruction may conceal students' social conflicts, burdens, and misconceptions, which must be taken into consideration as they affect conditions for potential learning in groups.

Other significant disadvantages of group work are especially related to students' preference for teacher versus peer work instruction, students' cultural differences, social characteristics of the group, and discourse language proficiency and negotiations of meanings. These problematic factors are explored below.

Teacher Versus Peer Work Feedback and Instruction

Research dealing with group and writing in second language instruction has thoroughly investigated students' preference on classroom instruction and feedback. Even though some studies present pedagogical arguments in favor of peer feedback rather than teacher feedback for L1 students, recent research has pointed out that this does not hold for L2 speakers, as students considerably favored teacher feedback as more effective than peer group (Leki, 1991; Mangelsdorf, 1992). In a research carried out by Leki (1991) ESL students were specifically asked regarding their preferable classroom instruction for feedback on written work. Results show that students greatly preferred teacher feedback over peer feedback. A similar study was conducted by Berger (1989, as cited in Zhang, 1995), yet this time the study has focused on students' instruction preference with prior participation on peer and self-directed feedback. The author reports that even if they have been exposed to peer and self-directed feedback they would highly favor teacher feedback. As Davis (1997) claims, "the cultural background of some non-North American students who are accustomed to a teacher-centered classroom may also play a role in that these learners are not willing to accept instruction from another student" (p. 270). Consequently, students with different cultural backgrounds and educational experiences may become a challenge for teachers who work with peer groups, since nonnative speakers almost unequivocally prefer teacher feedback.

Cultural Differences

Studies conducted by Carson and Nelson (1996) and Nelson and Carson (1998) focused on L2 students' cultural values and their perceptions of interaction in peer group response. With the use of a microethnographic study, they investigated Chinese cultural-

specific behaviors in peer group response in an ESL composition classroom. In order to properly reflect Chinese interactional style, two Spanish speakers were also analyzed. Results show that group work can be potentially problematic due to divergent views on the nature of group as a result of students' cultural values. Chinese culture is highly collectivist; consequently, the group serves "to maintain the relationships that constitute the group to maintain cohesion and group harmony among the group members" (Nelson & Carson, 1998, p. 2). On the other hand, highly individualistic cultures such as the United States value the group for its benefits to the individual and to the task required.

As the study indicates, Spanish speakers hold more individualistic values: they are more task-oriented, imposing their views and criticizing essays. Conversely, Chinese students are reluctant to speak: they withhold comments, criticism, and claims of authority, because they think it would hurt or expose peers, creating conflict in social relations and compromising group harmony. Although they know their role as critics of students' writings, they rarely disagree with peers. Accordingly, "Chinese students' participation was constrained by the student's expressed sense of their social goals for the group" (Nelson & Carson, 1998, p. 7). It follows that a conflict of expectations about the quantity of talk and how it should be negotiated restricts the dynamics of interactions between Chinese and Spanish students in the group.

Another study conducted by Martine (2005), which aimed at studying nonnative and native speakers' differences on the amount of talk and turn-taking in peer groups, pointed out that few nonnative European speakers exercised control in discussions and Asian students contributed the least. Asian learners desired to participate, yet most of the time they felt uncomfortable or lacked the ability to engage in interactions. As Martine

indicates, nonnatives in general felt unable to participate because of the unique differences between native and nonnative speakers in terms of cultural values such as tolerance of silence, avoidance of uncertainty, values of cooperation, and knowledge of the subject. It seems that cultural values impact students' behavior and contribution to the group. With divergent behaviors, negotiations can become less vigorous and nonnative speakers may feel higher levels of discomfort. The peer group can fail to reach its goals as crucial factors related to cultural values, mutual help, exchange of knowledge, and social skills are not met.

Social Factors

Recently, with the study of group dynamics, the social dimensions of the group were investigated more thoroughly, providing a more adequate description of social relations, dismissing potential idealized views (Nelson & Murphy, 1992; Nyikos & Hashimoto, 1997). One of the first studies on ESL students in a writing classroom was conducted by Nelson and Murphy (1992), which provides a closer look at the social dimension of peer response and students' interaction with tasks. For 6 weeks, they videotaped one group's work, which reveals that students stayed on task and talked about the drafts. Yet, the social dimensions of the group were less than ideal, since the members of the group did not assist each other in constructive ways, and group disharmony prevailed. Further, one of the students in the group had an authoritative role, exercising a great deal of control in the group and changing the group dynamic in such a way that critical comments moved back and forth. As a result, students centered more on getting back at each other than in co-constructing knowledge and helping peers on writing. This

means that the authoritative figure can negatively impact interactions, as students become defensive or withdraw participation.

The authoritative figure also exercises control over students' social status, determining the role of low-status students. Consequently, students' role and status in a group can influence their reactions and engagement (Nelson & Murphy, 1992). In other words, authoritative students have power to control discussions, to attribute status relations, to impose assignments and ideas, which concede little opportunities for students' critical comments and vigorous participation. It is no coincidence that L2 speakers' primary objection to peer group interaction focuses on students' ignorance, apathy, and vagueness toward suggestions and exchange of ideas (Mangelsford, 1992). The low-achieving status assigned to NNs affects their satisfaction and integral participation, drastically interfering with the nature of interactions.

By analyzing students' input for academic achievements, Jacob et al. (1996) present a complex picture of students' social involvement in the group. Findings indicate that students often modified the teacher's assigned structure for the group, overall working individually and providing few negotiations. Most of the time, students ignored L2 speakers' requests for assistance. As the study suggests, "status relations might have influenced the interactions between native English speakers and L2 learners" (p. 274). In this way, students may attribute low status for nonnatives, which may limit access to interaction.

Cohen, Lotan, and Catanzarite (1990) claim that "interdependence in a group task . . . activates differential expectations for competence based on status characteristics. Once these expectations have become activated and relevant to the new cooperative task,

low-status students will interact less than high-status students” (p. 205). It implies that status relations influence student contribution to the group setting, where high-status students will be more active and influential, gaining more benefits from interactions, while low-achieving students will operate in a passive role with less access to interactions and learning.

Leki (2001) reports about two nonnative speakers’ experiences in a group project. She highlights the issue of power in the group, which concedes to the ones who hold the power of supremacy to define others and determine their behavior in a group, allowing them only a subordinate role and little contribution within the group. Consequently, “power differentials exaggerated by linguistic limitations in English variously prevented the learners from managing social/academic interactions to their own advantage” (p. 62). Indeed, NNs are desirous to participate and have potentially interesting suggestions; however, native students undermine NNs’ participation, showing no sympathy in discussing the tasks and presenting interest in their ideas and opinions. In this case, the problem does not rely necessarily on NNs’ social relationships and academic potential, but on native speakers’ unwillingness in building an open relationship that accepts full participation of the L2 learner. Nyikos and Hashimoto (1997) advocate that without strongly supportive social components, learning can be limited. However, as the study reveals, social support may not be enough, since even members who share friendly relationships may assign a submissive role for NNs in the community of practices. Hence, the power holder excludes the L2 speakers’ role as an active contributor, denying their full participation and integration in the community of practices.

Accordingly, NNs may experience feelings of frustration, lower self-esteem, and anxiety in a group setting, due to native speakers' dominance, power, and high status. Adding to that, difficulties related to language barriers, inexperience or inability to participate, divergent communication styles (Allaei & Connor, 1990) and sociolinguistics rules (Wolfson, 1981) create an environment of discomfort and foster feelings of inadequacy for L2 learners. As a result, their interaction and active participation are restricted.

For example, in an attempt to document the social and emotional experiences of a Japanese student of English named Hiroko, Swain and Miccoli (1994) observe three distinct phases in a small-group setting of a graduate-level course. In the first phase, the Japanese student is marked by feelings of depression because she felt unable to participate in the group due to her lack of background experience and linguistic ability. At other times, she seemed willing to enter the discussions, but felt restrained as the other members of the group "had the floor" (p. 20). Furthermore, the responsibility of sharing opinions made Hiroko anxious and afraid to try out comments, especially because she could misinterpret discussions. In the second phase, the Japanese participant wanted to participate and felt the necessity of sharing her opinions; however, her inability and inexperience in expressing views made her feel "'inferior,' 'irritated' and 'angry' with herself and peers" (p. 21). What also contributed to her depression was students' rejection of her ideas and contributions. In the third phase, the study shows that happy feelings began to emerge when Hiroko talked to the members of the group about her negative feelings, which in turn, made the group aware of her needs as they would "make an effort to give her time to express her ideas, but she would have to insert herself into the

conversation more aggressively” (p. 23). Although Hiroko felt more satisfied with her participation after communicating her feelings, we are left unsure about the extent to which she actively participated in all practices of the group.

As studies have shown, NNs have an arduous time adapting to group work, and negative feelings may be a constant due to a wide range of factors that hinder students’ participation. It seems that no matter whether a positive relationship between NNs and Ns is established, relations will be asymmetrical; that is, native speakers tend to dominate most of the decisions and conversations, while NNs have a tendency to play a passive and submissive role.

Discourse, Language Proficiency, and Negotiations of Meaning

Alongside the many challenges NNs face in peer interactions, they have to cope with their limited proficiency language level. As Nelson and Carson (1998) indicate, one of the main reasons why L2 students are less effective than L1 speakers in groups is that native speakers “have greater knowledge of English (implicit and/or explicit) and more confidence in their language abilities than nonnative speakers” (p. 129). Learners show concerns about their own language proficiency when working in groups, because they feel it inhibits participation (Martine, 2005), causes ridicule from peers (Linden-Martin, 1997), and produces anxiety, restraining students from talking even when they are compelled to speak.

Studies also analyzed the amount of talk, interruption, and turn-taking between native and nonnative speakers. According to Martine (2005), some students, especially Asian, expressed uncertainty in identifying the correct application of turn-taking, thus affecting their participation in the group. As results show, even with more NNs in a group

(4 out of 18), native speakers dominate turn-taking and talking in group activities. Analyzing the amount of turn-taking behavior and interruption made by native and nonnative speakers in a group setting of a mainstream composition class, Zhu (2001) found that nonnative speakers rarely initiate interaction in discussions and that most contributions were made by native speakers. In addition, nonnative speakers rarely interrupted comments when reading peer writing, while native speakers frequently interrupted when giving feedback.

Furthermore, research regards group work as an ineffective means for comprehension and confirmation checks, providing few opportunities for conversational modifications. Pica and Doughty (1985a) investigated the similarities and divergences of input and interactional features between teacher-fronted situations and small-group tasks in an ESL classroom. Their description indicates that interactional features of negotiation such as comprehension and confirmation checks, clarifications requests, and grammatical input occurred significantly more times in teacher-fronted situations. Shi's (1998) study compared the presence of interactional features in teacher-led discussion and peer groups. Results reveal that students in peer groups used more comprehension and confirmation checks, while teacher-led discussions tended to use more feedback and clarification. Based on the notion that feedback and clarification are more important for language development, the study implies that teacher interactions in the classroom tended to produce more solid modifications and negotiations of meaning.

While research indicates various interactional features and negotiations shared by learners in teacher-centered classrooms, investigations also have proposed that error treatment provided by learners is rarely picked up in the group setting (Porter, 1983).

Focusing on error treatment in groups, Bruton and Samuda (1980) observed that students were capable of providing correct feedback on peers' errors with the use of a variety of error treatment strategies, especially concerning lexical items. However, the study reveals that learners rarely perceived and integrated peers' error correction to their system.

Overall, the studies described first in the section above related to the benefits of group work for nonnatives' learning and indicated a range of cognitive, emotional, and social benefits of learning a second language in groups. Nevertheless, studies dealing with the problematic aspects of the use of group work display a growing body of research that challenges potential effectiveness of the group for nonnative speakers, as they might conceal complex interactional processes. Both negative and positive aspects of group work are important for an understanding of nonnative participation and perception of group work. Besides, they are also relevant theoretical notions that guide this study and serve as a resource for data analysis of nonnative speakers' participation in group work.

Theoretical Notions Related to Participation in Group Work

For a proper analysis of participation in group work the most important theoretical notions involve Vygotsky's understanding of learning in social interactions, and the idea of legitimate peripheral participation.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

Studies on L2 group work conducted on negotiations of meaning and collaborative learning have been extensively studied under the theoretical framework of sociocultural theory, proposed by Vygotsky (1978, 1981, 1986) and neo-Vygotskian scholars such as Leontiev (1981) and Wertsch (1985, 1991). Sociocultural theory claims that cognitive development is attained by social interactions within the environment,

which is achieved through mediation. For Vygotsky, “higher forms of human mental activity are mediated by culturally constructed auxiliary means” (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 59). That is, human activity does not deal directly with the physical world, but is mediated by symbolic artifacts such as literacy, technology, toys, books, eating utensils, etc., which in turn change behavior, cognition, and social relationships.

Important is the notion that social interaction is necessary for human development, where the assistance of an external behavior, by a teacher or a learner, increases learning. More specifically, Vygotsky (1978) points out that a child can accomplish higher levels of cognitive development with the ongoing assistance of a more knowledgeable person that results in change of behaviors and thoughts. In the Vygotskian thought, the term zone of proximal development refers to this potential development where “the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86).

As Jennings and Di (1996) stress, the notion of collaboration becomes inevitably significant, “making up the backbone of Vygotsky’s theory” (p. 77). Collaborative groups provide greater opportunities for more able students to assist less able students, encouraging scaffolding instead of competition between peers. Therefore, most researchers on group work rely on Vygotsky’s assumption that greater assistance may be provided for learners when they work together to solve a problem. The group provides a socially rich environment, yet nonnative speakers may need special assistance that facilitates potential development. Nevertheless, nonnative speakers’ participation and

interaction may have particular differences that are taken into account in the legitimate peripheral participation approach.

Legitimate Peripheral Participation

Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991) developed a learning approach known as legitimate peripheral participation. This approach conceives “learning [as] a process that takes place in a participation framework” (p. 15). Following this notion, participation provides the way to access local practices, activities, and identity, which are indispensable for holistic and transformative learning.

More specifically, legitimate peripheral participation involves learning through apprenticeship between two sorts of participations: the old-time comers, who exercise full participation; and the newcomers, who engage in interactions with old-time comers and, with their assistance, will gradually exercise a full participation in the community of practices.

In fact, this approach has to be viewed in accordance with its three key terms that are expressed in its name, because each “aspect is indispensable in defining the others and cannot be considered in isolation” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 35). Through participation with old-time comers, newcomers can actively engage in social practices that define the community, which allows them to gradually move from peripheral to full participation. It implies that newcomers’ involvement is essential for learning, as “participation in social communities shapes our experience, and it also shapes those communities; the transformative goes both ways” (Wenger, 1998, pp. 56-57).

Usually, newcomers’ participation starts as peripheral, with less intensive participation “as a way of gaining access to sources for understanding through growing

involvement” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 37). In the process of acknowledging and mastering local practices, old-time comers must grant newcomers legitimate participation and valid access to practices so that they can achieve learning and full participation. In short, newcomers “are likely to come short of what the community regards as competent engagement. Only with enough legitimacy can all their inevitable stumbling and violations become opportunities for learning rather than cause for dismissal, neglect, or exclusion” (Wenger, 1998, p. 101).

Through the lens of legitimate peripheral participation it is possible to make an analogy of nonnative speakers with the newcomers. Due to a range of factors such as L2 proficiency, cultural background, educational experiences, divergent interlanguage pragmatics, and sociolinguistic rules, nonnative speakers are deemed outsiders by native members. Nonnative speakers have a peripheral role at first, where they develop the skills, rules, and practices of the other peers. Yet, to become a member of the group, native speakers must grant legitimate and full participation to nonnative speakers so they can actively engage in the practices of the community.

However, because of limited English proficiency and few opportunities for participation, legitimate interaction may not be provided, as nonnatives might be deemed less capable members. Hence, the very opportunity of participation might be limited. As Pierce (1995) comments, “on the one hand, [language learners] need access to Anglophone social networks in order to practice and improve their English; on the other hand, they have difficulty gaining access to these networks because common language is an a priori condition of entry into them” (p. 78). Even when nonnatives become more

proficient English learners, legitimate participation may not be automatically conceded due to stigmatized perceptions already formed.

Yasuko (1999) points out that full participation may be compromised in three situations: (a) when native students deny access to resources which are necessary for nonnatives' full participation; (b) when native learners constantly devalue nonnative speakers due to their social behaviors resulting from their background experience; and (c) when stratifications are determined by students' background rather than skills or abilities. It means that nonnatives' full participation is not automatically given; they have to travel a long way, formulating strategies and mechanisms to successfully engage in all practices of the community. Still, some may only gain peripheral involvement.

Summary and Findings

In summary, the focus on group work emerged from the biggest paradigm shift in education, in which the traditional education model became obsolete and a new educational theory centered on the student came into view. Student-centered learning emphasizes pedagogical practices that promote an autonomous learner, critical thinking skills, and high reasoning. With the increased number of immigrants and diverse cultural and language backgrounds in the school setting, group work has become a valuable resource to promote the attributes, skills, and learning processes desired by the new learning system. It is not a coincidence that a specific set of structures and principles for group work have been widely studied. Consequently, collaborative and cooperative learning “are now being used extensively in every conceivable subject, at grade levels from kindergarten through college, and in all kinds of schools throughout the world” (Slavin, 1995, p. 4).

With a growing and solid body of research, group work design has relied on sound theoretical and pedagogical arguments for its use. In this context, collaborative and cooperative learning promote maximum learning and higher academic achievements, since they create a positive interdependence between learners in a way that everyone feels responsible for the tasks in the group. This setting also provides appropriate psychological conditions to increase learners' motivation and self-esteem, producing a less anxious environment for constructing knowledge, where students learn problem-solving and social skills in a meaningful way.

In regard to language acquisition, collaborative and cooperative learning fosters production of language and proficiency in listening and reading abilities. Learners have opportunities to negotiate meaning and be exposed to a great quantity of input and various interaction modifications, such as negative feedback (e.g., explicit correction or implicit correction such as clarification requests, recasts, etc.), which is crucial for second language learning.

Nevertheless, studies have suggested that group work may not be as effective for nonnative speakers, especially the newly arrived learners. In a sense, current enthusiasm for peer interaction may conceal students' social conflicts, burdens, and misconceptions, which must be taken into consideration as they affect conditions for potential learning in groups. As studies have shown, nonnative speakers' educational experience might be characterized by favoring teachers' over students' feedback. Moreover, different cultural values and views on the nature of group work might lead to conflicts of expectations about the quantity of talk and how it should be negotiated, as Nelson and Carson (1998) and Carson and Nelson (1996) properly have described. Hence, native speakers may

exercise an authoritative stance in the group controlling and conferring to nonnative students' low-status roles, which may concede little opportunity for critical comments and vigorous participation. Because of many divergent factors such as educational background, cultural views and values, interactional patterns and rhetorical modes, nonnatives may feel higher levels of discomfort and frustration, withdrawing participation or engaging only superficially.

Therefore, nonnative learners need to gain access to all the social practices that define the group as they interact with native speakers. Nonnative speakers may have only a peripheral participation in the group, but it may gradually become a full participation in the community of practices. However, the problematic nature of nonnative and native speakers' interactions in the group is that nonnatives may interact only in a very limited way due to natives' power to delegate subordinate roles to the nonnatives. Even nonnatives who share friendly relationships with natives may be allowed only a submissive and passive role.

Indeed, working in groups has profitable outcomes. Yet, nonnatives, especially newcomers, tend to have an arduous time adapting to group work due to a wide range of factors that hinder students' participation. It follows that nonnatives' full participation is not automatically given and some may gain only peripheral involvement.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The objective of this study is to investigate the attitudes and experiences of nonnative students in group work, taking into account the extent to which gender, age, level of education, time living in the United States, and years of English study in their home country and in the United States relate to students' beliefs and experiences. For this purpose, the third chapter describes the administration of the research design, the instrumentation, and the population sample, along with the procedures and data analysis undertaken.

Research Design

To identify international students' attitudes and experiences of group work, a survey research design was employed in which a closed-ended questionnaire (see Appendix A) with 39 questions was administered to a convenient sample of international students. The survey research method was selected as it can best assess in a single investigation a more comprehensive understanding of learners' perception about group work. Most studies of L2 speakers' experience in group work are based on naturalistic case studies (Leki, 2001), interviews (Martine, 2005), and microethnographic study (Nelson & Murphy, 1992), thus, the survey helps complement existing data, attempting to generalize results.

Population and Sample

The target population for this study was international students who were L2 speakers. The sample for this study was selected using convenient sampling procedure. The most important criterion for selection of the study participants was the characteristic of being a nonnative English speaker studying at Andrews University from 1 month to 4 years. Data were gathered from a sample of 102 respondents, though 2 were discarded. The population is composed of 12.5% from North and Central America (Mexico, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Guatemala, and Martinique); 19.8% of South American students (Peru, Columbia, Ecuador, and Brazil); 6.3% from Europe (Spain, Norway, Romania, Serbia, Iceland, and Russia); 9.4% from Africa (Zambia, Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon, and Madagascar); and 52.1% Asian students (Malaysia, Taiwan, Korea, China, Indonesia, Myanmar, India, and Kuwait).

Instrumentation

The literature on second language learning has given attention to second language speakers' burdens and negative experiences in the group. Studies advocate that nonnative speakers have a more passive and submissive role, where their participation is undermined due to language barriers and cultural and social factors (Leki, 2001; Nelson & Carson, 1998; Nelson & Murphy, 1992). Items for the survey were generated after a thorough review of the literature (see Table 1) and interviews with international students, resulting in the development of a 39-item questionnaire (see Appendix).

From the 39 items, 12 (8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 23, 28, 29, 30, 34, 35) were designed to measure students' attitudes toward group work. Nineteen items (12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19,

20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27, 31, 32, 33, 36, 37, 38) measured experience. The remaining seven items measured demographic characteristics such as age (1), gender (2), level of education (3), time living in the United States (4), region (5), time spent studying English in the home country (6), time studying English in the United States (7), and (8) TOEFL score. Items measuring attitudes and experiences were scaled along a 5-point Likert Scale from 1 = Strongly Agree to 5 = Strongly Disagree.

Procedure

The data were gathered during the months of May through June of 2011, when questionnaires were distributed in University dormitories, students' apartments, and around the campus of Andrews University (Berrien Springs, MI). Andrews University is a denominational institution from the Seventh-day Adventist Church and prepares its students to serve the church as well as equip them for society's needs. The institution is very diverse, receiving students from all over the world into their programs.

In order to collect the questionnaires, an explanation of the study was provided for each participant in order to confirm whether they considered themselves nonnative speakers and whether they understood what was meant by the expression group work. In the first lines of the questionnaire, I notified respondents that all answers involving nonnative and native interactions in the group should be from their first year as a nonnative learner, in order to increase research reliability.

Data Analysis

Using SPSS 19, responses were entered into a spreadsheet. Two respondents had an excessive number of missing values and, thus, were excluded from further analysis. All positively worded items were reverse-scored to be consistent with all negatively

Table 1

Variables, Definitions, and References

Variable	Conceptual Definition	Operational Definition	References
Attitude	Evaluative practices and reactions about the nature of group work	ESL students prefer teacher feedback to peer feedback	Leki (1991); Mangelsdorf (1992)
		Group members do not assist each other in constructive ways	Nelson and Murphy (1992a)
		Native speakers undermine Nonnative speakers' suggestions and ideas	Mangelsford (1992); Leki (2001)
		Native speakers ignore request for assistance	Jacob, Patrick, and Wheeler (1996)
Experience	The effects of L2 participation in group work and the results they might have in these events	Nonnative speakers rarely initiate discussions	Zhu (2001)
		Native speakers dominate turn taking	Martine (2005)
		Students often modified teacher's assigned structure for the group, overall working individually	Jacob, Patrick, and Wheeler (1996)

Table 2—*Continued.*

Variable	Conceptual Definition	Operational Definition	References
		Create an environment of discomfort and foster feelings of inadequacy for L2 learners	Swain and Micolli (1994)
		Language barriers cause ridicule from peers	Linden-Martin (1997)

worded statements. To answer research question 1 (What is the attitude toward and experience in group work of international students at Andrews University?), descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, percentages) were used. For research question 2 (Are attitude and experience related to gender, age, year of study, years of studying English, and scores on English Proficiency test?), *t*-tests, analysis of variance, and Spearman rho correlation were used. Statistical significance was tested at the 0.05 level.

Summary

This chapter indicated the methodology used in attaining nonnatives' experiences and attitudes in group work, covering the research design, instrumentation, population and sample, procedure and data analysis. In the following chapter, the results and the analysis of the data will be presented.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the attitude toward and experience in group work of selected L2 speakers at Andrews University. This chapter presents the sample characteristics, the validity and reliability of the instrument, and analyzes the relation of attitude and experience to the following variables: gender, age, level of education, time living in the United States, and years of studying English in the home country and in the United States.

Sample Characteristics

This study comprises eight variables: age (1), gender (2), level of education (3), time living in the United States (4), region (5), time spent studying English in the home country (6), and time studying English in the United States (7) and (8) TOEFL score. However, region and TOEFL score were not included in the analysis. Each variable was selected having in mind the correlation analysis, in order to find whether the sample characteristics, such as social background, level of proficiency, level of education and nationality, would influence students' attitudes and experiences towards group work.

As can be observed from Table 2, the age variable was divided in four groups: (a) 16-25, (b) 26-35, (c) 36-45, and (d) 46-55. The age group 36-45 had the highest percentage (34.3%), followed by 26-35 (29.3%). Probably, the age group 36-45 had the

Table 2

Sample Characteristics

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
16-25	26	26.3
26-35	29	29.3
36-45	34	34.3
46-55	10	10.1
Total	99	100.0
Gender		
Female	43	43.4
Male	56	56.6
Total	99	100.0
Level of Education		
Undergraduate	24	24.0
Graduate	75	76.0
Total	99	100.0
Time in the United States		
Up to 1 year	26	27.1
2 years	27	28.1
3 years	43	44.8
Total	96	100.0
Native Country (N C)		
North/Central America	12	12.5
South America	19	19.8
Europe	06	6.3
Asia	50	52.1
Africa	09	9.4
Total	96	100.0
English Study (N C)		
6-10 years	57	59.4
3-6 years	20	20.8
2-3 years	09	9.4
6-1 year	10	10.4
Total	96	100.0

Table 2—*Continued.*

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
English Study (United States)		
6 months	28	30.8
6 months-1 year	24	26.4
2 years	18	19.8
3 years	21	23.1
Total	91	100.0
TOEFL Score		
9-80	08	16.7
81-90	15	31.3
91-100	11	22.9
101-118	14	29.2
Total	48	100.0

highest score because the great majority of nonnative students in the University are graduate students (76% of the sample), with not many undergraduate students (24% of the sample). The ages between 16-25 also had a high score 26.3%, whereas the age group 46-55 had the lowest percentage (10.1%).

With regard to gender, the sample had nearly equivalent participants: 43.4% for female and 56.6% for male. According to the data, the number of nonnative students on campus is higher in the third year of study (44.8%) than in their first (27.1%) and second (28.1%) year. Half of the participants' population are from Asia (52.1%), which mirrors the fact that the highest number of international students on campus comes from this continent, followed by South America (19.8%), Central and North America (12.5%), Africa (9.4%), and Europe (6.3%); which shows that the University is culturally diverse.

Furthermore, the data show that, even though nonnative students are still learning and improving their English in the United States, the great majority (59.4%) had 6 to 10 years of prior English study in their native country, and another 20.8% students studied between 3 to 6 years. To a smaller degree, 9.4% of the participants studied 2 to 3 years, and 10.4% between 6 months to 1 year.

Moreover, 30.8% of the participants stated that they had studied English in the United States for 6 months, and 26.4% had studied from 6 months to a year, which demonstrates that in their first year in the United States 57.2% studied in a particular ESL program or individually. Nevertheless, it seems that some students (19.8%) continued studying English until their second year, and 23.1% in their third year.

It is important to point out that the question dealing with English proficiency scores provided participants with five possible test options for entering the University: TOEFL IBT (internet-based test), TOEFL PBT (paper-based test), TOEFL CBT (computer-based test), MELAB, and TOEIC. Based on a concordance table of the English Language Institute research reports (2001) from the University of Michigan and Vancouver English Centre, scores from tests were converted to TOEFL IBT, finding the appropriate corresponding score. Students who apply for an academic program at Andrews University are normally expected to have a minimum TOEFL IBT score of 80 points out of 120. Indeed, 31.3% of the participants achieved between 80 and 90 points. This was followed by the second highest percentage: 29.2% of participants scored between 101 to 118, which is an outstanding score. Also, 22.9% scored between 91 to 100, and 16.7% scored less than 80 points. Although the English proficiency score was

part of the questionnaire, this score was not included in the analysis due to differences in score pattern and outcome of the conversion of results to TOEFL IBT.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

The content validity of the instrument was presented in chapter 3. Prior to answering the research questions, exploratory data analysis was conducted to determine whether the data supported the presence of the two underlying constructs (attitudes and experiences) which the survey was designed to measure. Principal component analysis using varimax rotation (Warner, 2008) provided some support for the presence of two factors (see Table 3). The two factors explained approximately 34% of the total variance. The first factor consists of items measuring opinions (e.g., ‘native speakers discriminate against nonnatives due to lack of English proficiency’) and feelings (e.g., ‘feel embarrassed participating in groups’), and was labeled ‘Attitude toward group work’. The second factor consists primarily of items related to experiences (e.g., ‘it is a waste of time’; ‘I have not come to like group work’; ‘native speakers do not listen to what I say’; ‘native speakers disagree with my opinions’), and thus was labeled ‘Experience in group work’. Internal consistency reliabilities (Cronbach’s Alpha) for Attitude and Experience were 0.87 and 0.82 respectively. The correlation between Attitude and Experience was 0.40.

Data Analysis

The data analysis provided in this chapter is guided by the two research questions that drive the purpose of this study: (1) What is the attitude toward and experience in group work among nonnative learners? (2) Are attitude and experience related to gender, age, level of study, and years of studying English?

Table 3

Items and Components

Items	Component	
	1	2
Q25 Native speaker is always the leader of discussions	.742	
Q33 Nonnative speakers receive less participative roles	.738	
Q31 Native speakers dominate discussion in group work	.722	
Q32 Native speakers delegate roles in the group	.678	
Q28 I feel left out because of my lack of English proficiency	.658	
Q16 Native speakers dominate most of talking and interactions	.651	
Q24 Nonnative speakers have passive roles in group work	.582	
Q19 I stay quiet when native speakers disagree with me	.576	
Q38 I feel embarrassed participating in groups	.562	
Q29 Nonnatives are discriminated due to lack of English proficiency	.558	
Q27 Nonnative speakers avoid conflict and disagreements	.548	
Q35 Nonnative speakers feel uncomfortable in leading discussions and making decisions in group work	.481	
Q30 Native students associate nonnatives' lack of English proficiency with intellectual inferiority	.471	
Q22 Participating in group work has not helped me express my ideas and opinions		.754
Q20 Native speakers do not listen to what I say		.732
Q23 I have not come to like group work		.645
Q34 Interactions between natives and nonnatives are not friendly		.572
Q14 Group work is a waste of time		.557

Table 3—*Continued*

Items	Component	
	1	2
Q36 Nonnative speakers are neglected during discussions		.534
Q21 Native speakers do not incorporate my opinion		.522
Q17 Native speakers disagree with my opinions		.497
Q8 I do not like to participate in group work		.478
Q26 I think nonnative speakers work alone in groups		.456
Q15 Native speakers make fun of me during group work		.357

Research Question 1

In the discussion of the research question 1, I first analyze the attitude toward group work, and then the experience in group work.

Attitude Toward Group Work

In regard to the attitudes L2 students have towards group work, according to Table 4, the data indicate in question 19 that 52% of the participants do not stay quiet when native speakers disagree with their opinions. It means that more nonnative students actively engage in discussions and disagree with natives' opinions. As answers to question 35 show, nonnatives feel comfortable in leading the discussions of the group, with 31.3% perceiving otherwise. Data also suggest in question 24 that L2 speakers evaluate their role in the group as more passive and as avoiding conflict within the group, with 26.2% of the participants having a different evaluative judgment.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics: Attitude

Attitudes	N	Mean	SD	%^a
Q19 I stay quiet when native speakers disagree with me	10	3.54	1.226	52.0
Q28 I feel left out due to lack of English proficiency	99	3.45	1.304	49.5
Q32 Only native speakers delegate roles in the group	99	3.43	1.061	49.5
Q29 I feel nonnatives are discriminated because of their lack of English proficiency	99	3.16	1.210	39.4
Q33 Nonnative speakers receive less participative roles	99	3.13	1.027	38.4
Q30 Native students associate nonnatives' lack of proficiency in English with intellectual inferiority	98	3.07	1.221	36.7
Q35 Nonnatives feel comfortable in leading the discussions and making the decisions of the group	99	3.02	1.078	31.3
Q16 Native speakers dominate most of talking	100	3.01	1.352	41.0
Q25 The native speaker is always the leader of discussions in group work	99	2.81	1.235	32.3
Q24 I think nonnative speakers have a more passive role in group work	99	2.80	1.262	31.3
Q27 Nonnative speakers avoid conflict and disagreement within the group	99	2.76	1.011	26.2
Q38 I feel embarrassed participating in groups	95	2.73	1.455	30.5
Q31 Native speakers dominate discussions	99	2.72	1.196	29.3

^aPercentage: 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree.'

The international students conceive themselves as receiving less participative roles in the group, as question 33 displays, and the native speaker as having more

dominance over discussions, with 29.3% of disagreement in question 31. Accordingly, when asked in question 25 whether the native speaker is always the leader of discussions in group work, only 32.3% disagreed. It appears that nonnatives not only believe that natives exercise more control over discussions, but they also feel somewhat discriminated against. As the data show, 39.4% of the participants in question 29 do not believe nonnatives feel discriminated against in a group because of their lack of English proficiency, which means that more learners think they are discriminated against due to low levels of English proficiency. Moreover, when asked in question 30 whether native students associate nonnative lack of proficiency in English with intellectual inferiority, only 36.7% of the sample did not believe in the association between lack of English proficiency and intellectual inferiority.

These results appear to suggest that, nonnatives' attitudes show that they are not reluctant to speak when native speakers disagree with their opinions. Rather, they tend to react and be active contributors in discussions. Even so, nonnatives believe that native speakers seem to take the leading role and to dominate discussions to a greater extent in the group. Besides, they feel discriminated against by native speakers in terms of inferior intellectual capability.

Experience in Group Work

Table 5 indicates international students' experience within the group instruction. In relation to the treatment native speakers offered L2 speakers in discussions, it seems that nonnatives positively view native students as respecting their opinions, avoiding humorous comments about them, where 69% of the participants agreed that they do not make mocking comments. Question 17 shows that native speakers do not disagree with

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics: Experience

Experiences	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	%^a
Q15 Native speakers make fun of me	100	3.95	1.192	69.0
Q17 Native speakers disagree with my opinion	100	3.88	.998	70.0
Q34 Interactions between native and nonnative speakers are not friendly	98	3.64	.997	58.2
Q20 Natives do not listen carefully to what I say	100	3.62	1.071	60.0
Q22 One year participating in group work did not help me to interact with native speakers expressing my ideas and opinions	98	3.52	1.007	53.0
Q8 I do not like to participate in group work	100	3.51	1.267	49.0
Q14 I feel working in groups is a waste of time	100	3.49	1.168	53.0
Q36 Nonnative speakers are neglected in discussions and participation	96	3.41	1.001	51.1
Q26 I think nonnative speakers work alone in groups	98	3.34	1.015	42.9
Q21 Native speakers really incorporate my opinions	100	3.23	.993	41.0
Q23 I have come to like group work more, as a result of my improvement in English	99	3.15	1.273	38.4

^aPercentage: 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree.'

nonnatives' opinion, with 70% favoring the fact that natives agree with their ideas.

Furthermore, natives also tend to incorporate international learners' opinion, as question 41 displays. Although native students are respectful and open to incorporating

nonnatives' ideas, the data show that 60% of the participants evaluate natives as not listening carefully to what they say, and 58.2% believe that their interactions with natives are not considered friendly.

Nonnatives' perception about their own experience in group work demonstrates that they came to like group work as a result of their improvement in English, with 38.4% on question 23 perceiving otherwise. However, this is less so as a result of participating one year in group as indicated on question 22, where 53% responded that one year did not help them interact and express their ideas. Nonetheless, learners react positively about working in groups, where 53% rate that working in groups is not a waste of time. Still, more nonnative speakers support the statement that they work alone in group work, with 42.9% having a different point of view.

Therefore, the data suggest that native speakers are respectful of nonnatives' comments, are open to discussion, and to incorporating their ideas. Nevertheless, less attention is given to what they actually propose. There is also indication that nonnatives believe interactions between native and nonnative speakers are not friendly. Possibly, the existence of moments in which they were not carefully heard led to the conclusion that interactions are not friendly.

In addition, it seems that nonnative speakers can engage actively in the social group, since they do not have a hard time managing interactions. For them, the most important factor for readiness to participate is their improvement in English, less so in acquiring the ability in the social practices of the group. Learners recognized the importance of group for classroom instruction and reacted positively about the group setting. Still, most nonnative speakers tend to work individually.

Research Question 2

In the discussion of the research question 2, I initially analyze the attitudes and experiences related to gender, then to level of education, and to other variables.

Gender

The comparison made between gender and L2 speakers' attitudes and experiences in the group presents no significant correlation, and the analysis shows that there is a slight difference between learners' attitude and experience (see Table 6). When we consider students' attitudes mean scores, females had 3.15 occurrences and males had 2.93, which indicates that no actual differences exist in gender attitudes, since both uphold a neutral attitude toward group work. In other words, both genders have ambivalent perspectives toward group work, with some having positive and others a negative evaluative reaction.

Table 6

Variables: Gender

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	SD	T	df	p
Attitude	Female	43	3.15	.825	1.51	97	.13
	Male	56	2.93	.657			
Experience	Female	43	3.60	.659	0.89	97	.39
	Male	56	3.49	.554			

The analysis of learners' experience suggests that both genders have similar experiences in groups, with females displaying a mean of 3.60 and males 3.49. However,

these means are beyond the neutral perspective, more towards strongly disagree in the questionnaire. In terms of experience, results reveal that females and males present more positive reactions toward group work than negative ones. Hence, the kind of experiences in the group are positive and fruitful. Although females and males assume a neutral attitude when queried about their reactions to group work, their actual experiences are positive and optimistic.

Level of Education

The analysis of data shown in Table 7 indicates that the level of education is not statistically significant when compared to attitudes and experiences. Results show that graduates and undergraduates have similar attitudes and experiences in regard to the group. Findings suggest that students have neutral attitudes, with graduates presenting a mean of 3.01 and undergraduate students 3.04, which implies that students hold not one position in particular, but demonstrate both positive and negative attitudes. Nevertheless, in terms of experience, graduate and undergraduate students considered it more positive than negative, with a mean of 3.52 for graduate and 3.53 for undergraduate students.

Table 7

Variables: Level of Education

Variable	Year of Study	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p
Attitude	Graduate	76	3.01	.772	-.15	98	.88
	Undergraduate	24	3.04	.665			
Experience	Graduate	76	3.52	.632	-.11	98	.92
	Undergraduate	24	3.53	.664			

Other Variables

Table 8 indicates the scores for age, years in the United States, years studying English in their home country and in the United States, in relation to nonnatives' attitudes and experiences. Although statistically there is no significant difference between the variables, consistent results point to the neutral stance of nonnatives' attitude toward the group with neither a positive nor negative position, signaling its somewhat ambivalent nature. Conversely, all variables above show that in relation to experiences, learners' perceptions are more positive than negative. Their personal experiences in group work are favorable and considerably positive. Therefore, L2 speakers display divided positions,

Table 8

Other Variables

Variable	Years in US	Years Eng. Home	Years Eng. US	Attitude	Experience
Age	.10	-.22	.03	-.05	-.09
Years in US		.06	.35*	.13	-.09
Years English Study Home			-.09	-.16	-.12
Years English Study US				.03	.09
Attitude					.39*
Experience					-

*p<0.001.

showing neutral attitudes in relation to group instruction and holding favorable views about their experiences and participation.

Summary and Findings

The present research attempted to discover the attitudes and experiences of nonnatives in regard to group work and their relation to gender, age, level of education, and years of studying English. My analysis took into consideration the legitimate peripheral participation, where newcomers, in this case nonnative speakers, receive valid access to legitimate participation with the assistance of old-time comers and the mastery of the social practices that define the group work community. However, findings showed a different dynamic with nonnative attitudes and experiences. Results indicate that L2 speakers do not perceive themselves as receiving a peripheral role in the group, where they participate passively, and few opportunities are given to interact. They also do not appear to be moving from a peripheral participation situation to a legitimate peripheral with enhancement and socialization in the group processes.

Even though nonnative speakers possess limited linguistic resources to communicate or discuss at the same academic and linguistic level of other students, and they might experience feelings of discomfort, depression, and inadequacy (Swain & Miccoli, 1994), the most important factor for readiness to participate is their improvement in English, less so in acquiring ability in the social practices of the group or psychological factors.

Nonnatives' attitudes and experiences show that they are active members in the group, engaging in discussions, not being reluctant to speak when natives disagree with their opinion. They manage to engage in discussions and contribute to the dialogue

between students, the most important factor for readiness to participate being their improvement in English. Although they realize that inevitably the native speakers seem to take the leading role and to dominate discussions to a greater extent in the group, it does not mean that nonnatives receive a passive role in the group.

The data suggest that nonnative students are not neglected in discussions; native speakers are open for discussion and respect L2 speakers' participation. Even though nonnatives believe native speakers incorporate their ideas, they feel undermined as considerably less attention is conferred on what they actually propose. Hence, learners recognized the importance of group work for classroom instruction and react positively about the group setting, despite the fact that the social dimensions of the group contribute to a certain degree of negative feelings.

Nonnative speakers feel they are discriminated against by native students in terms of inferior intellectual capability. There is also indication that nonnatives believe interactions between native and nonnative speakers are not friendly. Possibly, experiences where nonnatives did not receive careful attention in discussions led to the conclusion that interactions are not friendly. In this sense, nonnatives' perception of group work is twofold: they feel they can participate and interact peacefully with the members of the group, but they still feel devalued in their contributions, tending to like to work in groups but preferring working individually.

The outcome of the experience and attitudes in relation to gender, age, level of education, and years of studying English, shows that there is no statistically significant difference in the results. Findings consistently pointed out the neutral stance of nonnatives' attitudes toward the group, holding both positive and negative positions,

signaling its somewhat ambivalent nature. Conversely, all variables indicate that in relation to learners' experience they hold more positive than negative perceptions. Their personal experiences in group work are favorable and positive.

Therefore, nonnatives display divided positions, showing neutral attitudes in relation to group instruction and holding favorable views about their experiences and participation. Overall, it seems that L2 speakers have a favorable view of group work and contribute actively to discussions. Still, they feel undervalued by native participants and believe that interactions could be friendlier. Even so, the dynamic of interactions tends to be more positive than negative, which means that though nonnatives feel devalued and have a preference to work individually rather than in groups, their social exchange among peers can function productively.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to better understand the effectiveness of group instruction involving L2 speakers the present study investigated nonnative English speakers' attitudes and experiences in group work and their relation to gender, age, level of education, time living in the United States and English study in the United States and home country. In this sense, the second chapter provided a theoretical background of the literature on group work in the field of second language learning. The third chapter presented the methodology used in attaining nonnatives' experiences and attitudes in group work, which comprised the research design, instrumentation, population and sample, procedure and data analysis. Then, the fourth chapter examined the attitudes toward and experiences of selected L2 speakers in group work.

The second chapter presented an overview of the negative and positive attributions of group work related to second language learning research. The bulk of research on group work centers on cooperative and collaborative learning, which promote maximum opportunities for input and output, academic language, and language proficiency achievements, particularly for production on listening and reading abilities. Group work fosters the nature and amount of negotiations of meaning, and occasions for interactional output modifications based on corrections that are crucial for language learning, as in the case of negative feedback (e.g., explicit correction or implicit

correction such as clarification requests, recasts, etc.). In regard to psychological conditions, group work increases learners' motivation and self-esteem, producing an environment with less anxiety for students to develop social and language skills to deftly co-construct knowledge with native peers. Thus, group work develops students' social, psychological, and mental abilities. Nevertheless, recent studies have also suggested that cooperative learning may not be as effective for nonnative speakers, especially newly arrived learners, due to challenges that they have to overcome in terms of language barrier, education, cultural adaptation, and their initiation in the social practices of the group. As studies show, nonnative speakers' educational experience and educational system might favor teacher rather than student feedback. Moreover, different cultural values and views about the nature of group work might lead to conflicts of expectations about nonnatives' participation. Native speakers may also exercise an authoritative stance in the group, controlling and conferring to nonnative students low-status roles, which may concede little opportunity for vigorous participation. Hence, studies point out that current enthusiasm for group work may conceal nonnative students' social conflicts, burdens, and misconceptions. This reality must be taken into consideration as it affects conditions for potential learning in groups.

The methodological and statistical procedures were indicated in the third chapter, and the actual analysis was undertaken in the fourth chapter. The analysis took into consideration the legitimate peripheral participation, where newcomers, in this case nonnative speakers, learn the social practices of the group and receive valid access to legitimate participation through the assistance of old-time comers. At first, the newcomers have a peripheral role, where few contributions to the group are made.

However, with time they gradually have access through the social practices that define the group work community. As some studies point out, nonnatives are neglected in discussions and have a passive participation, which hinders nonnative students' interaction with native speakers and success in the group setting (Carson & Nelson, 1996; Nelson & Carson, 1998; Leki, 2001). Investigations in second language learning have pointed out that group work instruction may conceal second language speakers' particular burden in interaction with native speakers, since they have to travel a long path to overcome cultural and social differences to obtain full participation in group work.

Nevertheless, the present research showed a different dynamic with nonnatives' attitudes and experiences. Findings indicate that nonnatives do not perceive themselves as receiving a peripheral role in the group, in terms of passive participation and few opportunities to interact. They also do not appear to be moving from a peripheral participation situation to a legitimate peripheral with enhancement and socialization in the group processes. In other words, nonnative speakers do not go through a process of apprenticeship of social practices with the assistance of native speakers. Rather, they manage interactions and participation satisfactorily. Results suggest that their perceptions of group work participation are mainly attached to difficulties related to language barriers. It means that the most important factor for readiness to participate is their improvement in English, less so in acquiring the ability on the social practices of the group or psychological factors. Nonnatives' attitudes and experiences show that they are active members in the group, engaging in discussions, and not being reluctant to speak when natives disagree with their opinions. But even though they do not see themselves as

developing a passive role in the group, they still realize that native speakers seem to take the leading role and to dominate discussions to a greater extent in the group.

The data suggest that nonnative students are not neglected in discussions, because native speakers are open for discussion and respect nonnatives' participation. Although nonnatives believe native speakers incorporate their ideas, they feel undermined as less considerable attention is conferred to what they actually propose. Hence, learners recognize the importance of group for classroom instruction and react positively about the group setting. Yet, the social dimension of the group displays a certain degree of negative feelings. Learners feel discriminated against by native students as they attribute inferior intellectual capability to them. Second language speakers also believe interactions between native and nonnative speakers are not friendly, possibly due to experiences where nonnatives did not receive careful attention. Therefore, nonnatives' group work perception has a twofold aspect: while they can participate and interact peacefully with the members of the group, they still feel devalued in their contributions, tending to like to work in groups but preferring to work individually. Furthermore, questions were made about changes in nonnatives' perception in relation to group work, however, their retrospective perceptions show a consistence in their attitudes and experiences toward group work.

The outcome of the relationship of experience and attitudes with the variables gender, age, level of education, time living in the United States and English study in the United States and home country, shows that there is no statistically significant difference in the results. Findings consistently pointed to the neutral stance of nonnatives' attitude toward the group, holding both positive and negative positions. However, in regard to

learners' experience, all variables indicate that the perceptions are more positive than negative. Hence, nonnatives display divided positions, showing neutral attitudes in relation to group instruction, but holding favorable views about their experiences and participation. Overall, it seems that learners contribute actively in discussions and have a favorable view of the group. Yet, they believe that interactions could be friendlier. In this context, it seems fair to conclude that the dynamic of interactions tends to be more positive than negative, which means that though nonnatives feel undermined by native speakers, and thus prefer to work individually rather than in groups, their social exchange among peers can function productively.

The results that emerged related to nonnative attitudes and experiences must take in consideration the fact that most participants are graduate students and they lived in an environment known for its diversity, which could have contributed to the outcome of the present research. Future investigations could explore more thoroughly the influence of psychological and cultural factors on interactions. In this sense, analysis on how different cultural views and geographic regions influence nonnatives' participation in the group should be conducted. Studies also could focus on observing which strategies trigger nonnatives' participation in the group, and how differences in learning style and personality affect students' evaluation of their attitudes and experiences in the group.

APPENDIX

SMALL GROUP WORK QUESTIONNAIRE

You are being asked to participate in an evaluation study of small group work. The study aims at identifying non-native and native speakers' involvement in group work. Therefore, remember that all the questions about non-native and native interactions in the group must be from your first year as a nonnative learner. ²Please answer the items as honestly as possible. **Thank you for your support!**

Personal Questions

[1] Age: _____ [2] Gender: F _____ M _____ Year of Study: [3] Graduate _____
Undergraduate _____

[4] How long have you been living in the U.S:

- 1. 6 months
- 2. 6 months to 1 year
- 3. 2 years
- 4. 3 years

[5] Native Country and Native Language: _____

[6] How long did you study English in your country?

- 1. 6 years to 10 years
- 2. 3 years to 6 years
- 3. 2 years to 3 years
- 4. 6 months to 1 year

[7] How long have you studied English in the U.S?

- 1. 6 months
- 2. 6 months to 1 year
- 3. 2 years
- 4. 3 years

Study Question	Strongly				
	Agree		Disagree		
[8] 1. I like to participate in group work:	1()	2()	3()	4()	5()
[9] 2. I do my assignment better when I work in groups:	1()	2()	3()	4()	5()
[10] 3. When people work in groups, only some students do all the work:	1()	2()	3()	4()	5()
[11] 4. I learn more information when I am listening to the teacher, instead of working in groups:	1()	2()	3()	4()	5()
[12] 5. My background experience (in my country) has prepared me to participate in small group class discussions:	1()	2()	3()	4()	5()
[13] 6. The educational system in my country uses a lot of group work:	1()	2()	3()	4()	5()
[14] 7. I feel working in groups is a waste of time.	1()	2()	3()	4()	5()
[15] 8. When participating in a group, native speakers make fun of me:	1()	2()	3()	4()	5()
[16] 9. Native speakers dominate most of the talking and interactions of the group:	1()	2()	3()	4()	5()
[17] 10. The native speaker used to disagree with my opinion:	1()	2()	3()	4()	5()
[18] 11. When a native speaker disagrees with me, I continue insisting on my ideas:	1()	2()	3()	4()	5()
[19] 12. When a native speaker disagrees with me, I stay quiet:	1()	2()	3()	4()	5()
[20] 13. Generally native speakers listen carefully to what I have to say:	1()	2()	3()	4()	5()
[21] 14. Native speakers really incorporate my opinion:	1()	2()	3()	4()	5()

[22] 15. One year participating in group work help me to interact with native speakers expressing my ideas and opinions:	1()	2()	3()	4()	5()
[23] 16. I have come to like group work more as a result of my improvement in English:	1()	2()	3()	4()	5()
[24] 17. I think non-native speakers have a more passive role in small group work:	1()	2()	3()	4()	5()
[25] 18. The native speaker is always the leader of discussions in group work:	1()	2()	3()	4()	5()
[26] 19. I think, non-native speakers work alone in small groups:	1()	2()	3()	4()	5()
[27] 20. Non-native speakers avoid conflict and disagreement within the group:	1()	2()	3()	4()	5()
[28] 21. I feel left out in a group because of my lack of English proficiency:	1()	2()	3()	4()	5()
[29] 22. I feel non-natives are discriminated in a group because of their lack of English proficiency:	1()	2()	3()	4()	5()
[30] 23. Native students associate non-native lack of proficiency in English as inferiority of intellectual capability:	1()	2()	3()	4()	5()
[31] 24. Native speakers dominate discussion in the group:	1()	2()	3()	4()	5()
[32] 25. Only native speakers delegate roles in the group:	1()	2()	3()	4()	5()
[33] 26. Non-native speakers receive less participative roles:	1()	2()	3()	4()	5()
[34] 27. Interactions between native and non-native speakers are friendly:	1()	2()	3()	4()	5()
[35] 28. Non-native speakers feel comfortable in leading the discussions and making the decisions of the group:	1()	2()	3()	4()	5()

[36] 29. Non-native speakers are neglected in discussions and participation:	1()	2()	3()	4()	5()
[37] 30. Beginning non-native speakers interact well in groups with native speakers:	1()	2()	3()	4()	5()
[38] 31. In my first semester or year I've felt embarrassed participating in groups as a non-native speaker:	1()	2()	3()	4()	5()

[39] Most recent TOEFL IBT or MLAB? _____

Other and score: _____

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